

226 times in the four Gospels. On the other hand, the word “sinner” is only used 29 times. These facts may indicate where Jesus focused His attention. He was most frequently training His followers, while at other times, He was evangelizing the lost.

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### Did Jesus Keep Bad Company

*“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)*

Jesus’ morals could not be corrupted no matter what company He kept. He is our example for godly living. Would He have befriended evil people, knowing that we were to follow His example? Would that not result in us having corrupted morals?

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Sending Friends To Hell?

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;”
(2 Timothy 4:1)

As we see in 2 Timothy 4:1, Jesus is the **Judge**. He will judge both the living (His followers) and the dead (sinners condemned.) If Jesus were indeed a friend of sinners, would that mean He would send His friends to eternal torment in hell?

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### Turning Enemies Into Friends and Family

*“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32)*

Herein is the calling of believers. We are **not** called to **befriend sinners!** We **are** called to turn **enemies into friends!**

**EVANGELISM** is the key to friendship! **Friendship** is **NOT** the key to evangelism!

Jesus came to seek and save the **lost!** If you love people, tell them about Jesus. They will become friends and, **better yet**, family; once they have come into the Kingdom of God.

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Why Do Many Embrace This Concept

The popularity of the notion that Jesus was a “friend of sinners” is possibly due to a couple of things.

- The individual doesn’t like **evangelism**, and it is a convenient excuse not to tell people about Jesus (until they have earned the right to be heard)
- They may want to avoid the ridicule and mockery of standing up for Jesus (let alone severe persecution.)

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### Conclusion: Love Your Enemies

*“But I say unto you, Love your **enemies**...”*

(Matthew 5:44)

Jesus clearly states that we are to love our **enemies**. This thought means that, as his followers, we have enemies. Who would the enemies of Christians be? Unbelievers!

Jesus tells us to **love** our **enemies**... He does **not** say to consider our **enemies** as **friends**.

We must be friendly to sinners...not friends.

We should be like Jesus and be friends with His disciples... His followers.

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By: Robert Dallmann

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*“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a **gluttonous** man, and a **winebibber**, a **friend of publicans** and **sinners!**” (Luke 7:34)*

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### Who Called Jesus A “Friend Of Sinners”

We often hear that Jesus is a “friend of sinners.” Perhaps a more accurate phrase would be that Jesus is a “friend of repentant sinners.” But we will look at that shortly.

As we see in Luke 7:34 (quoted above), the **Pharisees** called Jesus a friend of sinners and intended it to be a derogatory comment to impugn Jesus. These religious leaders were accusing Jesus of improper behavior.

Assuredly, if the Pharisees make an accusation, the opposite is probably true. For example, in Luke 7:34, the religious leaders said Jesus was a glutton. Was Jesus gluttonous? They also said Jesus was a drunkard. Was Jesus a drunkard? They likewise said Jesus was a friend of sinners. Was Jesus a friend of sinners? To be consistent, Jesus was **NOT** a glutton, a drunk, or a friend of sinners.

Does Jesus consider Himself to be a friend of sinners, or is He aware of God’s wrath against sin, and is He seeking to save the lost?

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Who Did Jesus Call “Friends”

*“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but **I have called you friends**; for all things that I have heard of my*

JESUS - FRIEND OF SINNERS - REALLY?

Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15)

Those whom Jesus considers His friends is far more important than the accusations of the Pharisees.

- **Pharisees** said that Jesus' friends were sinners
- **Jesus** said His friends were His disciples

Who are we going to believe?

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### **Ungodly Friendships—What Does The Bible Say**

*"Ye **adulterers** and adulteresses, know ye not that the **friendship** of the world is **enmity** with God? whosoever therefore **will be a friend** of the world is the **enemy** of God."* (James 4:4)

*"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath **righteousness** with **unrighteousness**? and what communion hath **light** with **darkness**? (15) And what concord hath **Christ** with **Belial**? or what part hath he that **believeth** with **an infidel**? (16) And what agreement hath the **temple of God** with **idols**? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."  
(2 Corinthians 6:14-16)*

Having read these passages, is it conceivable that Jesus was a friend of sinners? Think about it.

In James 4:4, we see that desiring friendship with the ungodly equates to **spiritual adultery**. This passage also tells us that being friends with the world is **enmity** with God and makes one His **enemy**! "Enmity" means hostility and hatred. "Enemy" is a likewise strong word meaning hateful, an adversary (especially Satan.) Essentially, desiring friendship with the world is a **declaration of war against God**.

Reading 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 adds even more

weight against the concept that Jesus was a "friend of sinners." These verses make the opposition between the godly and the ungodly quite evident. The presented contrasts are infinitely stark.

How can righteousness and unrighteousness be friends?

What does light have in common with darkness? They cannot even exist in the same place at the same time. Once light is brought into a place of darkness, darkness ceases to exist in that place. Therefore, light and darkness can't have any agreement.

As if the previous antitheses were not enough, Paul compares Jesus with Satan (Belial.) How much does Jesus have in common with the devil? **Absolutely nothing!** Likewise, believers and unbelievers have no justification for friendship. We are the temple of the Holy Ghost and cannot have fellowship with the temple of idols.

At this point, it should be obvious that the **Pharisees were wrong** when they said Jesus was a *friend of sinners*.

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Friendship Evangelism – A Modern Construct

The notion of "*friendship evangelism*" is a newer idea that cannot be found in the Bible. Generally, people use these ideas to justify **not** sharing the Gospel of Jesus with others.

This doctrine often presents itself in three ways:

- We must become friends with unbelievers to earn the right to share Jesus with them
- We must live righteously, which unbelievers will see, desire, and ask us what makes us different. Then we share Jesus
- Our righteous lifestyle is all the evangelism we need. No speaking of the Gospel is necessary.

Friendship evangelism makes the Great Commission easy for believers. In each of the above scenarios,

preaching the Gospel is either **not necessary at all** or not necessary until some future convenient time.

Who would want God's power unto salvation (the Gospel, Romans 1:16) to be **withheld** from people? **SATAN!** The enemy of our souls relishes the concept of *friendship evangelism*, as he knows that it will often result in **NO EVANGELISM!**

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### **Jesus Spent Most Of His Time With The Disciples**

Did Jesus "hang out" with sinners? Were they His friends?

While it is certainly true that Jesus did not avoid sinners. He dined with them...spoke with them... loved them...and shared the truth with them.

But it is a falsehood to proclaim that Jesus spent much of His time with sinners. The truth is that Jesus spent **most** of His time with **REPENTANT** sinners. He spent most of His time with **His followers!**

When we read the Gospels, we see that Jesus was most often with his disciples (repentant sinners.) However, he does not stay amongst the unrepentant for long periods of time. Instead, they repented and followed Him (like Mary Magdalene), or they were not heard of again in the Bible.

Here is a little test: name some unrepentant tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners with whom Jesus spent a great deal of time.

Could you think of any? I could not!

Here is another thought to ponder regarding Jesus' friends, the word "disciple" is used approximately